

PART IV

The Pattern of Agriculture

Farms: Number and Size

Small farms are characteristic of agriculture in Clark County. Over two-thirds of all the farms in the county are less than 50 acres in size. Clark County ranks fourth in the state in numbers of farms, having a total of 4,100 according to the 1954 Census.

Farm numbers have dropped by 434 since 1945 and the average size has gained by nine acres. In common with a general trend over the state, farms are tending to become fewer in number and larger in size. As a rule, medium-sized farms are being consolidated through purchases or leases. Suburban developments also take their toll. Even with the trend toward establishing larger farms, the present average-size farm in Clark County of 51 acres is considerably below the Washington average of 270 acres.

The large number of small farms results from earlier land purchase methods, from high land values near cities, some suburbanization and from an interest in part-time farming by industrial workers. Many of the original 640 and 320 acre donation land claims founded in the 1850's and the 160 acre Homestead Act claims of the 1856-1910 period have been divided into smaller holdings.

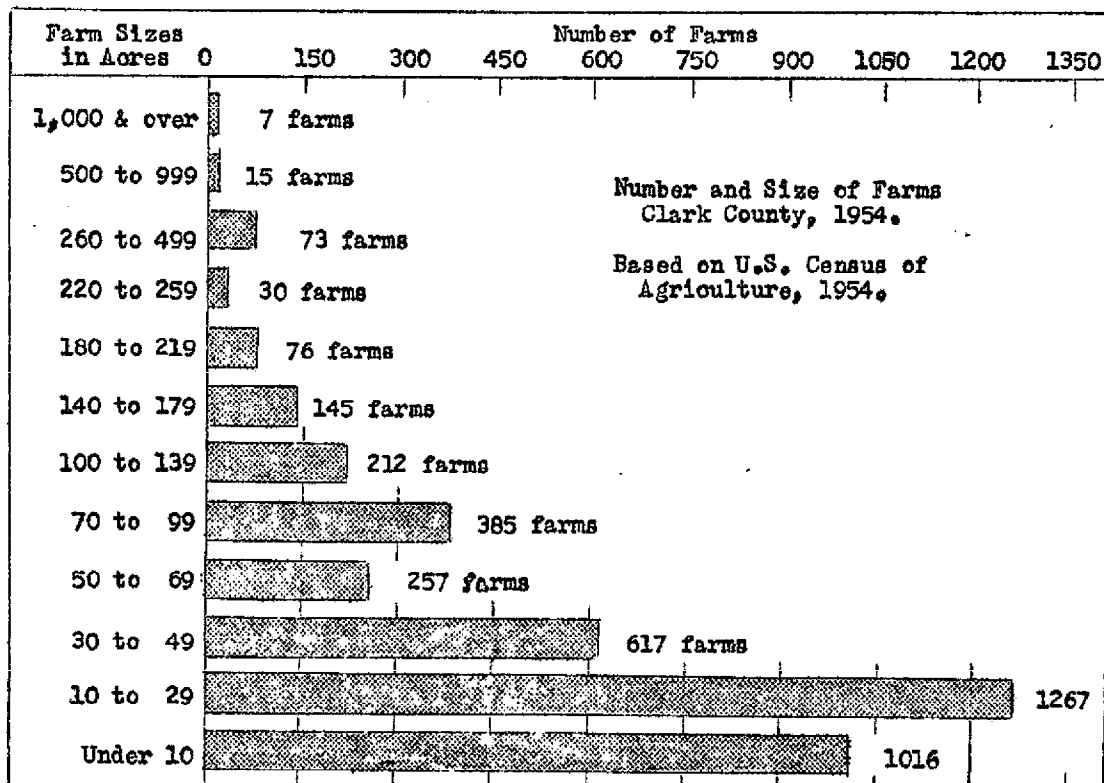


Figure 7.- Number and Size of Clark County Farms, 1954.

Larger farms have been divided among heirs or fragmented into lots and small farms for easier sale. Small units generally found more buyers during the 1920 to 1945 period than farms with over 100 acres. Because of the nearness to industrial employment in Vancouver, Camas and Portland, there has been a strong demand for small units for residences and for operation on a part-time basis as orchards or poultry farms. These and other factors have created the pattern of present agricultural holdings.

Table 8.- Clark County Farms; Number, Total Land in Farms and Average Size of Farms 1900-1954.

Year	Total Farms in the County	Total County area in farms (acres)	Average size of farms in the county (acres)	Percent of County area in farms
1900	1,873	192,737	102	47.5
1910	2,515	186,929	74	46.1
1920	3,066	194,309	63	48.0
1925	3,420	192,444	56	47.5
1930	3,503	194,482	56	48.0
1940	4,528	209,036	46	51.6
1945	4,934	204,847	42	50.6
1950	4,132	219,049	53	54.1
1954	4,100	208,414	51	51.4

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture, 1900-1954.

Large-Size Farms

Although small farms are most common, seven large holdings in the county exceeded 1,000 acres in 1954. These large farms are largely in hilly areas with a major part of their acreage in idle land, woodland pasture and woodland.

Table 9.- Large Farms: Number and General Land Use Clark County, 1954

Land Utilization on Large Farms	Farms 1,000 to 4,999 acres
Number of farms-----	7 farms
Land in farms-----	10,122 acres
Cropland harvested-----	1,312 acres
Cropland used only for pasture--	1,439 acres
Cropland not harvested and not pastured (idle, fallow land)--	1,035 acres
Woodland pastured-----	1,910 acres
Woodland not pastured-----	700 acres
Other pasture (not cropland and not woodland)-----	2,944 acres

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Some of these farms sell pulpwood and small logs and other minor forest products. They also have large acreages of unimproved pasture land and cut-over or burned-over land in various stages of reforestation.

Farm Values

Farm land and farm buildings have increased in value greatly since 1940. With the exception of the 1930-1940 period, farm property has steadily gained in value. Values dropped to abnormal lows in the depression years of the early 1930's. The increase in value was rapid again after 1940, more than doubling by 1950. By 1955 estimated total for all farms, including land and buildings, was \$56,555,400. An average farm in 1955 was valued at over \$13,000 averaging \$280 per acre including buildings. Value has been added by the large investments in land clearing, orchard plantings and building improvements. Demands for land and timberland by industries, and residential property demands by an expanding population in the area surrounding Vancouver, have been important factors.

Table 10.- Value of Farm Property
Clark County, 1900-1954

Year	Total Value All Farm Property in County	County Average Values	
		Per Farm (dollars)	Per Acre (dollars)
1900	\$ 4,397,720	\$ 2,350	\$ 23
1910	15,527,862	6,175	82
1920	23,613,688	7,700	122
1930	27,318,861	7,780	140
1940	21,455,133	4,740	102
1950	46,447,812	11,240	210
1954	56,555,400	13,295	280

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

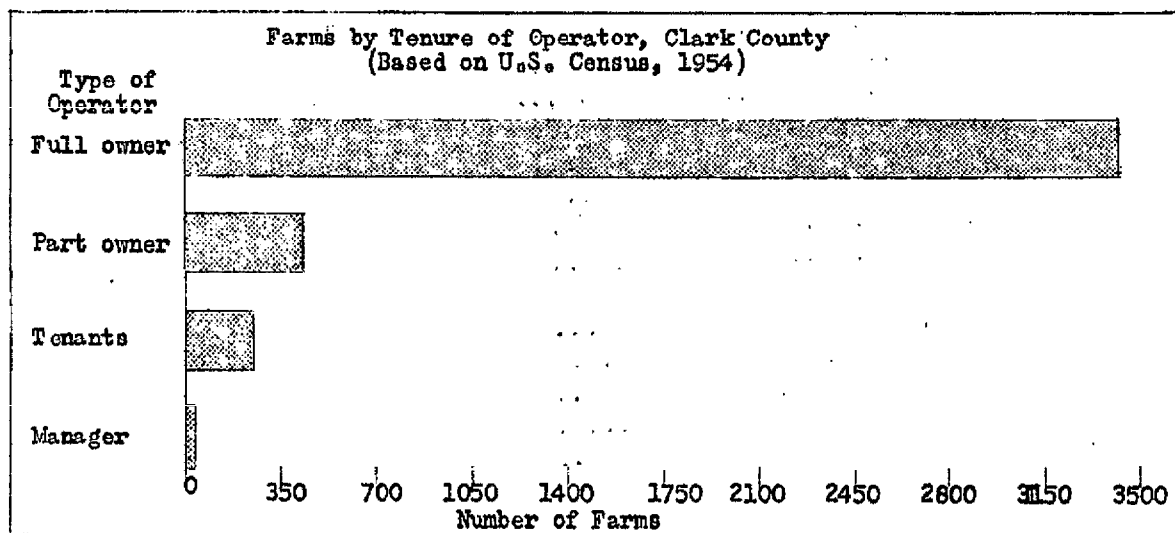


Figure 8.- Farms by Tenure of Operator, Clark County, 1954.

Farm Tenure

A large majority (about 83 out of each 100 farmers) own and operate their farms. Tenancy is uncommon in Clark County. Only 228 out of 4,100 farms were operated by tenants in 1954. Many farms have remained in ownership of the pioneer families who established them. About 11 percent of farms were operated by part owners in 1954, showing an increase during the last 30 years. This pattern is caused by elderly persons and part-time workers living on farms and maintaining ownership of farm residences while letting other farmers operate part of the land for a share of the crops used or sold. Farms operated by managers numbered only 10 in 1954.

Table 11.- Farm Tenancy, Number and Percent of Farms
By Tenure of Operator, Clark County
1925-1954

Year	Number Farms in County	Full Owners		Part Owners		Managers		Tenants	
		number of farms	percent of all farms	number of farms	percent of all farms	number of farms	percent of all farms	number of farms	percent of all farms
1925	3,420	2,735	80.0	270	7.9	22	.6	393	11.5
1930	3,503	2,664	76.0	354	10.1	34	1.0	451	12.9
1935	4,591	3,475	75.7	327	7.1	15	.3	774	16.9
1940	4,528	3,495	77.2	372	8.2	16	.4	645	14.2
1945	4,934	4,306	87.3	308	6.2	8	.2	312	6.3
1950	4,129	3,515	85.1	409	9.9	7	.2	201	4.9
1954	4,091	3,424	83.7	438	10.7	10	.2	228	5.6

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Table 12.- Types of Farms, Clark County, 1954

Type of Farms	Number of Farms	Percent of all farms in the county
Total farms in county.....	4,100	
Field-crop farms.....	26	.6
Cash-grain.....	20	.5
Other field-crop.....	6	.1
Vegetable farms.....	45	1.1
Fruit-and-nut farms.....	220	5.4
Dairy farms.....	617	15.0
Poultry farms.....	220	5.4
Livestock farms other than dairy and poultry.	173	4.2
General farms.....	125	3.0
Primarily crop.....	55	
Primarily livestock.....	25	
Crop and livestock.....	45	
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms.....	2,666	65.0

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Types of Farms

Farm types in Clark County are fairly well diversified and over half cannot be classified by type because of the varied nature of the income. Dairy farms are most common, numbering 617. Clark is fifth in number of dairy operations in the state. There were 200 poultry farms in 1954, the county ranking sixth in this specialty type. Clark is seventh in the state in fruit and nut farms which number 220, and it leads western Washington counties in numbers of fruit and nut orchards. Fourth most important are the livestock farms raising beef cattle and livestock other than dairy animals.

Farmland Utilization

Crops were harvested from only about 27 percent of the land in farms in 1954. The major type of farmland is woodland pasture and woodlands which combined take up about 37 percent of all farm lands. A third major use is cropland pasture and permanent pasture. The large acreages in woodland and woodland pasture is typical of western Washington which was originally heavily forested. On rough terrain and steep slopes, Douglas fir forest vegetation tends to reforest itself. Because of the costs in labor and machinery to clear cut-over land or reforested land, most farmers leave the poorer soils on their farms in woodland or woodland pasture. Pastured stumpland is common. Many farmers have started to practice forestry, leaving dense regrowth stands undisturbed to furnish timber for farm use or future commercial cutting.

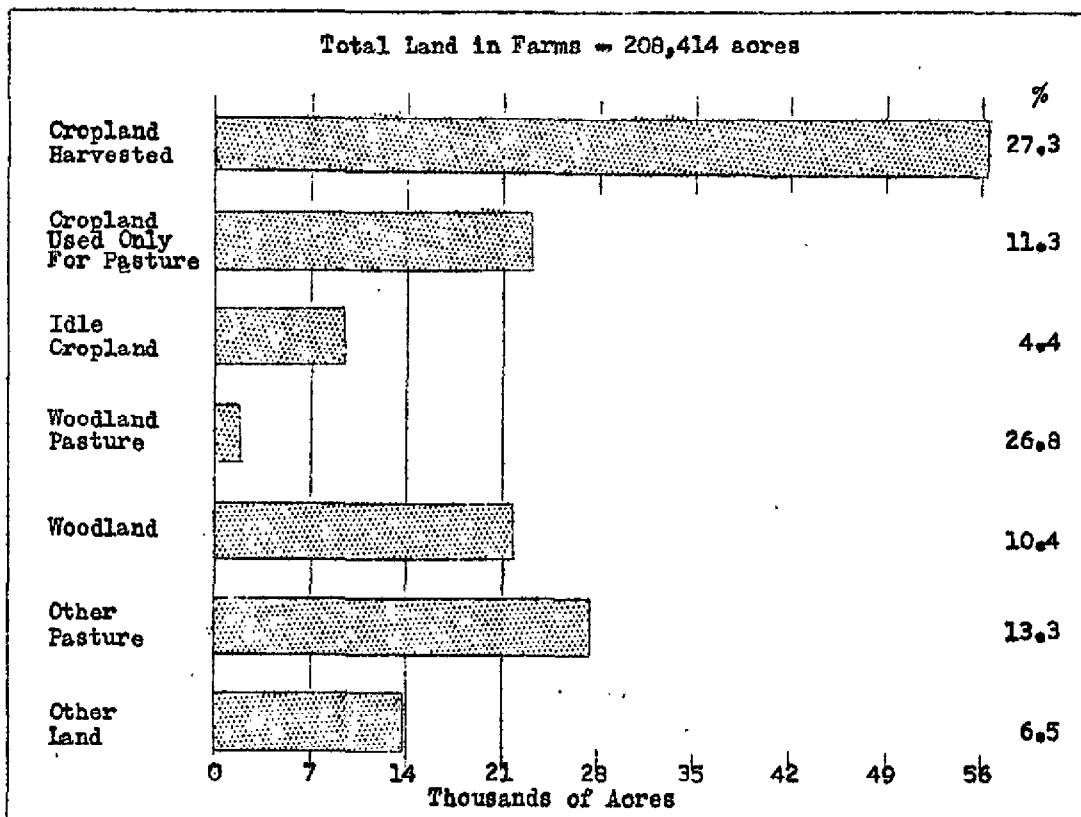


Figure 9.- Utilization of Farmland in Clark County, 1954.

Farm Residence and Operation

Clark County agriculture is characterized by a large amount of part-time farming. Many persons reside on the land and divide their employment between farm work and wage earning in other industries. The lower Columbia River cities, the Portland industrial area and the forested countryside provide a variety of full-time or seasonal jobs within commuting distance. At some time during 1954, about two-thirds of all Clark County farmers worked off their land in some other industry. Of this group, 2,356, or 57 percent of all farm operators, worked in non-farm industries more than 100 days during the year. Over one-half of the operators earned more from off-farm work than was received from sales of livestock and crops. Clark County part-time farming exceeds the state average of 46 percent, but is about average for western Washington.

Farm Facilities

In 1954 most of the farms in Clark County were equal and above state averages in the use of facilities which save labor and make rural life easier. Farmers in this county enjoy extensive and low-cost electric service provided by both privately and publicly-owned utilities. Over 98 percent of farm homes are equipped with electricity and about 70 percent have telephones. Washington State averages for these facilities on farms are 97 and 74 percent respectively. The farming country is closely adjacent to Portland and is within the reception zone of three television stations. Over one-half of the farm homes have

Table 13.- Specified Facilities and Equipment on Farms
Clark County, 1954.

Facility or Equipment Item	Number of Farms Using	Percent of All Farms in County Equipped
Telephone.....	2,880	70.2
Electricity.....	4,037	98.5
Television set.....	2,094	51.1
Piped running water.....	3,867	94.3
Home freezer.....	1,145	27.9
Electric pig brooder.....	45	1.1
Power feed grinder.....	242	5.9
Milling machine.....	689	16.8
Grain combines.....	161	3.9
Corn pickers.....	—	—
Pick-up balers.....	295	7.2
Field forage harvesters.....	134	3.3
Artificial ponds, reservoirs and earth tanks.....	216	5.3
Motortrucks.....	1,702	41.5
Tractors.....	3,017	73.6
Automobiles.....	3,482	84.9

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

television sets. Nearly all the farms have piped running water and nearly one-third have home freezers. Electricity consumption on farms and electric rates are below the state average. When last surveyed in 1949 Clark County average farm electric bills were \$6.70 monthly, compared with the state average of \$8.50.

Farming is well-advanced in the use of labor-saving mechanical equipment. Nearly three-fourths of the farms were using tractors in 1954 and Clark County was second in the state in numbers of farm tractors. There were 689 farms using milking machines, Clark ranking fifth among Washington counties in this respect. The county also ranked fifth in use of hay balers. Growers and producers use a large number of trucks to market their products and to transport crops and livestock during the crop year. Over two-fifths of the farms use trucks and 85 percent of farm families have automobiles.

Irrigation and Facilities

Because of the dry summer climate and the farmers' needs for higher yields of pasture grass, oats and truck crops, there has been an increasing interest in irrigation equipment. Dairymen find that sprinklers greatly increase the carrying capacity of pastures and also increases hay yields. Well-drained, sloping loam soils on the terraces and hillsides, common in Clark County, require considerable surface irrigation because the soil top horizon dries out severely in mid-summer.

Table 11.- Irrigation Farms: Number and Acreage.
Clark County, 1950 and 1954.

Item	1950	1954
Number of irrigated farms.....	80	276
Land irrigated 1/.....	1,228 acres	5,463 acres
Irrigated land in farms according to use:		
Farms irrigating crops.....	61	185
Farms irrigating pasture.....	35	165
Acres of crops irrigated.....	865 acres	2,821 acres
Acres of pasture irrigated.....	345 acres	2,642 acres

1/ Includes all land irrigated by sprinkler systems.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

In 1954 there were 5,463 acres being irrigated, an increase of 4,235 acres since 1949. The irrigation consisted of about 275 individually or farm-owned systems using mainly wells, pumps and sprinklers. There also were a few gravity systems. Most of the irrigation is on the small specialty farms under 30 acres which grow berries and vegetables. The sharp trend toward more irrigation in Clark County follows a general pattern going on throughout parts of western Washington where farmers are specializing in high-value commercial crops. Hay and pasture shortages in recent years and increased costs of feeds purchased by dairymen are other factors causing a continued investment in irrigation equipment. This is an important factor in higher yields per acre for many crops.

Table 15.- Clark County's Rank Compared With
Other Washington Counties

Item Compared	Rank	Quantity	Year
<u>General</u>			
Land area.....	34	405,120 acres	1954
Number of farms.....	4	4,100 farms	1954
Land in farms--percent.....	15	51.4 percent	1954
Average size of farms.....	33	51 acres	1954
Cropland harvested.....	19	56,821 acres	1954
Rural farm population.....	6	11,784 persons	1950
Total county population.....	6	85,307 persons	1950
<u>Cash farm income</u>			
Value of all farm products sold..	21	8,584,322 dollars	1954
Value of livestock sold.....	8	6,068,113 dollars	1954
Value of crops sold.....	21	2,221,592 dollars	1954
<u>Livestock on farms</u>			
All cattle and calves.....	12	39,400	1954
Milk cows.....	7	15,010 head	1954
Hogs.....	10	4,205 head	1954
Chickens.....	8	211,175 birds	1954
Horses and mules.....	15	1,047 head	1954
Sheep and lambs.....	12	5,614 head	1954
<u>Dairy and poultry products sold</u>			
Value of dairy products sold.....	6	3,326,460 dollars	1954
Whole milk sold.....	6	78,639,000 pounds	1954
Value of poultry products sold...	6	1,625,136 dollars	1954
Chickens sold.....	6	657,987 birds	1954
Eggs sold.....	8	1,824,477 dozen	1954
<u>Important crops harvested</u>			
Clover and timothy.....	4	16,073 acres	1954
Alfalfa.....	15	4,469 acres	1954
Strawberries.....	4	801 acres	1954
Fruits.....	6	3,046 acres	1954
Filberts.....	1	832 acres	1954

Source: U.S. Censuses of Agriculture, 1950, 1954.